

Chapter 4

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This chapter identifies and describes state, federal and local government agencies and programs that provide and manage parks and open space. It also identifies and describes the primary non-profit and commercial groups involved in providing outdoor recreation to the state's citizens.

STATE PROGRAMS

N.C. State Parks System

The North Carolina State Parks System was created in 1916 when Mount Mitchell became the first state park. The Division of Parks and Recreation, within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, manages the state parks system. The North Carolina state parks system exists for the enjoyment, education, health, and inspiration of all our citizens and visitors.

The mission of the state parks system is to conserve and protect representative examples of the natural beauty, ecological features, and recreation resources of statewide significance; to provide outdoor recreation opportunities in a safe and healthy environment; and to provide education opportunities that promote stewardship of the state's natural heritage.



The State Parks System manages 35 state parks, four recreation areas, seven state lakes and 20 natural areas that encompass about 225,000 acres as well as four state trails and four state rivers. These park units protect a variety of resources and also provide a multitude of recreational uses, ranging from simple day activities - such as self-guided nature walks - to tent and trailer camping.

The Mountains-to-Sea State Trail will traverse North Carolina and connect Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks. Approximately 600 miles of the proposed 1000 miles have been completed.

Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program

The Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program provides matching grants to local governments to improve pedestrian access to the state's beaches and waterways. The program originally focused on beach access but was expanded in 1983 to include North Carolina's vast network of estuarine shorelines, coastal rivers and urban waterfronts.



More than 280 access sites have been constructed since the program began. Local governments are responsible for construction, operation and long-term maintenance of their sites. These sites, plus other public beach access sites, are marked with easily identified blue and orange Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access signs. The access sites range from large regional facilities with parking, restrooms, showers, dune crossovers, water fountains and life guards to small local facilities providing dune crossovers.

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

The North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve is a natural outdoor laboratory where scientists, students and the public can study estuarine dynamics and learn about coastal natural areas. Established in 1982, the reserve is a collection of four representative estuarine ecosystems along North Carolina's coast. The sites contain more than 10,500 acres of barrier islands, salt marshes and tidal waters, habitat for hundreds of species of fish, bird and other wildlife.

North Carolina's estuarine system – the third largest in the nation and the fourth most productive – is exceptionally diverse. It lies within two biogeographic regions, the Virginian and the Carolinian, and has many different salinity regimes, basin types and tidal patterns. Examples include Currituck Banks, Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island.



Educational State Forests

Seven educational state forests are managed by the NC Forest Service. They are Clemmons, Holmes, Jordan Lake, Mountain Island Lake, Rendezvous Mountain, Turnbull Creek, and Tuttle. These unique forest environments are located from the far West to the lower coastal plain. The widely varied terrain offers a rich mixture of pine and hardwood forests. Features are made accessible by a series of well-marked trails accented by exhibits and displays depicting the ecology of a managed forest.



Each forest features self-guided trails that include exhibits, tree identification signs, a forest education center and a talking tree trail. Picnic facilities further enhance the forests. Specially trained rangers are available to conduct classes for school and other youth groups. Teachers or group leaders choose from a selection of 30-minute programs that cover all aspects of the forest environment – from soil, water and wildlife to timber and forest management.

N.C. Department of Transportation Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

The Bicycle Program assists local governments with the development of bicycle programs and the construction of bicycle facilities; develops standards for designing bicycle facilities; and constructing the state bikeway system. Initiated in 1975, the state bicycle program has been designating, mapping and signing of bicycle touring routes, which direct bicyclists away from more heavily traveled roads to safer alternate routes. To date, nine routes covering 3,000 miles of roads have been developed.

N.C. Historic Sites

Administered by the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, North Carolina Historic Sites allow visitors to see the state as it was. Twenty-seven sites scattered across the state open doors of the past by preserving and interpreting the history of people that have lived in North Carolina, from Native American cultures to colonial communities to early agriculture and industry. Visitor centers with exhibits filled with artifacts and multimedia presentations are located at most sites, as are picnic facilities.



The historic sites seek to preserve significant properties and artifacts related to events, people and themes important to the state's past. These sites provide a valuable resource for teaching and learning about the past.

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

The Wildlife Resources Commission manages and regulates the state's wildlife. The agency is responsible for enforcing boating laws on inland waters. It sells hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and registers boats owned by North Carolina residents. The agency also provides wildlife-related outdoor recreational opportunities.

The commission manages approximately two million acres of state-owned, federally owned and privately owned gamelands on which the public may fish and hunt with a special permit. These areas are scattered across the state. The commission also maintains boating access areas that provide free 24-hour access to 80 different bodies of water in North Carolina.

Office of Land and Water Stewardship

The Office of Land and Water Stewardship within the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources was created in November 2013 to coordinate the efforts of the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and the N.C. Natural Heritage Program.

The Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership works to identify, protect and restore the significant natural resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. It is a cooperative effort jointly sponsored by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and in partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The program area extends across most of the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed, including the Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, Roanoke, Chowan, Lower Roanoke, and parts of the White Oak River basins.

The Clean Water Management Trust Fund provides grant assistance to conservation non-profits, local governments and state agencies across North Carolina for the protection and restoration of surface waters, including drinking water supplies; the protection of significant ecological, cultural and historic sites; and the provision of buffers around bases to protect the state's critical military mission.

The Natural Heritage Program's goal is the preservation of the natural diversity of North Carolina. The Natural Heritage Program is the first comprehensive attempt to determine, through an intensive state-wide inventory, the state's most significant natural areas. Through the inventory, areas of prime ecological significance can be identified and recommendations for protection of these areas can be made. Using the information from the heritage inventory, the state can identify areas that best represent its natural heritage and determine if these areas are being adequately safeguarded. A state register recognizes important natural areas, public and private, in conservation management. Long-term results of the program can mean that the state's resources will remain for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations while supporting economic development in the state.

This stewardship program provides monitoring and management of conservation easements and lands held by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources for stream and wetland mitigation.

N.C. Zoological Park

The N.C. Zoological Park, located on approximately 2000 acres six miles southeast of Asheboro, is among the world's largest land area zoos and was the first one planned from its inception around the natural habitat concept of zoological exhibits. The purposes of the zoo are education, entertainment, recreation, research and the conservation, preservation and propagation of plant and animal life.

The indoor exhibits include the Forest Aviary, the African Pavilion and the Sonora Desert. Outdoors, the zoo offers a 300-acre African World, which exhibits African animals in a variety of natural habitats, and the North American region.

North Carolina Aquariums

The aquariums were established in 1976 to promote an awareness, understanding, appreciation and conservation of the diverse natural and cultural resources of North Carolina's ocean, estuaries, rivers, streams and other aquatic environments. The aquariums are located at Roanoke Island, Pine Knoll Shores, and Fort Fisher.



FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Federal roles in outdoor recreation include the management of federally owned properties such as parks, forests, wildlife preserves and reservoir areas, and the administration of financial and technical assistance programs to aid state and local governments and private citizens. In North Carolina, the federal agencies that primarily provide outdoor recreational opportunities are the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Defense.

U.S. Department of the Interior

The Department of the Interior was created by Congress in 1849. The Department's recreational responsibilities include administering the nation's scenic and historic areas; conserving, developing and utilizing fish and wildlife resources; and coordinating federal and state recreational programs.

Within the department, two agencies provide outdoor recreation resources and programs in North Carolina: The National Park Service and The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS), created by Congress in 1916, is charged with conserving scenery, wildlife and natural and historical objects, and administering the nation's parks, recreational areas and historical areas. Acquisition and development of these resources for such purposes as providing camping, boating, swimming, hiking and historical interpretation are governed by NPS's determination of public need and demand for such facilities.

NPS is also involved in planning, coordinating and developing national recreation policy; conducting surveys of recreational resources and needs in the United States; and developing a plan to meet these needs. The NPS also provides financial and technical assistance for state recreational planning and land acquisition and development.



In North Carolina, the NPS administers 10 areas that are set aside for their natural, recreational and historical interest. These include the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Cape Lookout National Seashore, Moores Creek National Battleground, the Wright Brothers Memorial, the Carl Sandburg Home, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site and Guilford Courthouse National Military Park. These areas offer a wide range of public outdoor recreational activities such as camping, swimming, boating, fishing, nature study, hiking and picnicking.

The National Park Service also administers the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). An annual apportionment from LWCF is made available to the state for distribution to state agencies and local government entities for approved, high-quality outdoor recreational projects meeting needs identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. These funds are administered at the state level by the Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of

Environment and Natural Resources. Since 1965 LWCF has assisted with nearly 900 projects in North Carolina with grant funds totaling nearly \$80 million.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's goals for public use of its areas and facilities are to expand man's understanding of his environment and his appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology. The service provides visitors to its sites with high quality, safe and enjoyable recreational experiences oriented towards wildlife and wildlife habitat appreciation. The Service manages 11 national wildlife refuges in North Carolina comprising approximately 400,000 acres. They are Alligator River, Cedar Island, Currituck, Dismal Swamp, Mackay Island, Mattamuskeet Lake, Pea Island, Pee Dee, Pocosin Lakes, Roanoke River and Swanquarter. Most of these are limited-purpose outdoor recreation areas that provide primarily for wildlife habitat, but they also provide opportunities for hunting, fishing and photography.

U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service (and the national forest system), within the US Department of Agriculture, was created by Congress in 1905. The responsibility of the Forest Service in the field of outdoor recreation is to develop the recreational potential of national forests in conjunction with other multiple uses. The Forest Service also cooperates with other federal, state and local agencies in planning and developing recreational resources on other federal, state, local and private lands.



In North Carolina, the Forest Service administers four areas: the Croatan National Forest (160,000 acres); Nantahala National Forest (530,000 acres); Pisgah National Forest (505,000 acres); and the Uwharrie National Forest (50,000 acres). The areas, which comprise about 1.25 million acres, are a significant component of North Carolina's recreational resources. They contain some of the state's most pristine lands, including extensive woodlands, springs, streams and mountains. Within these four national forests, the Forest Service manages many developed public recreation sites.

National Wilderness Preservation System

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 United States Code 1131) established a National Wilderness Preservation System. Management of areas in the system is the responsibility of the agency (or agencies) having jurisdiction over the areas prior to their inclusion in the system.

There are currently 12 designated wilderness areas in North Carolina, consisting of more than 110,000 acres. Eleven of these are administered by the U.S. Forest Service. They are: Ellicott Rock, Joyce Kilmer- Slickrock, and Southern Nantahala, located in the Nantahala National Forest; Linville Gorge, Middle Prong, and Shining Rock, located in the Pisgah National Forest; Birkhead Mountains, located in the Uwharrie National Forest; and Catfish Lake South, Pocosin, Pond Pine and Sheep Ridge, located in the Croatan National Forest. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the remaining wilderness area, Swanquarter. The U.S. Forest Service is studying other areas for possible wilderness designation.

National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 United States Code 1271) states that Wild or Scenic rivers must *"possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, cultural, or other similar values."* Further, the Act requires that they *"shall be preserved in a free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations."*



Five rivers in North Carolina have been designated into the national system: the New River (26 miles), the Horsepasture River (4 miles), the Lumber River (81 miles), all of the Chattooga River (58 miles) and Wilson Creek (23 miles). The New, Horsepasture and Lumber rivers are also N.C. Natural and Scenic Rivers and are administered by the state.

National Trails System

The National Trails System Act of 1968 (16 United States Code 1241) provides the framework for establishing a nationwide system of scenic, recreational and historical trails. The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture are both authorized to administer trails in the system under the Act. The National Trails System totals over 60,000 miles in all 50 states

National recreational trails also play an important role in the National Trails System. As declared in the act, national recreational trails are intended to be established near urban areas and in established scenic areas to serve the constantly increasing outdoor recreational needs of an expanding population and to promote close-to-home recreational opportunities.

U.S. Department of Defense

The Department of Defense, established in 1949, includes the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of the Air Force. Each of these military services is involved in providing outdoor recreational opportunities in North Carolina.

U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers

Along with its primary responsibility for navigation, flood control, beach erosion control and river basin studies, the Corps of Engineers has devoted considerable attention to the establishment of recreational facilities. It is the policy of the Corps to plan for and provide outdoor recreational resources and facilities at all of its water resources projects. The Corps' general authority for recreational development stems from the Flood Control Act of 1944, which was later expanded by the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 (16 United States Code 460). The latter act directs that full consideration be given in each project to opportunities for outdoor recreation and fish and wildlife enhancement, and it established outdoor recreation and preservation of wildlife and fish as a full project purpose.

In North Carolina, the corps has developed four water resource projects that have recreational facilities: John H. Kerr Reservoir; B. Everett Jordan Reservoir; Falls Lake; and W. Kerr Scott Reservoir. Resources and facilities are available at these areas for a wide variety of activities, including freshwater swimming, boating, fishing, camping, field sports, picnicking, hiking and hunting. The corps leases many of these areas and facilities to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation and the Wildlife Resources Commission for management. The corps also operates recreational facilities – boat launching and picnicking – at the three locks and dams on the Cape Fear River.

In addition to its public works development programs, the corps participates with the state and other public bodies in making recreational opportunities available adjacent to corps projects. This participation takes the form of cost-sharing, assistance in planning and design, and the direct development of facilities.

Military Installations

The Department of Defense provides land at North Carolina military installations for recreational purposes. Although public outdoor recreation is not a major function of the Department of Defense, its contributions in this regard are, nevertheless, important to North Carolina's overall outdoor recreation program. Generally, all military installations offer some degree of outdoor recreation programs for military personnel, their dependents and their guests. Access to their resources for recreational use by the general public, however, is usually limited. But departmental policy provides that when a military installation's mission does allow public access, formal agreements may be reached with appropriate state or local agencies to provide opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers two programs that, in the past, have had an impact upon outdoor recreation in urban areas. Since 1981, however, funding for these programs has been reduced substantially.

Community Development Block Grants Program

HUD provides Community Development Block Grant funds to local governments through its Entitled Grant Program and Small Cities Program. These programs were established as a result of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended through the Housing and Community Development Amendments of 1981 (42 United States Code 5301). The Entitled Grants Program serves entitlement communities (municipalities of 50,000 or more, urban counties of 200,000 or more and central cities under 50,000 located in Metropolitan Statistical Areas). The Small Cities Program serves non-entitlement municipalities and counties. Both programs authorize a 100 percent level of funding to public agencies for the preservation or provision of urban open space lands that have park, recreational or historical value. In addition, the programs provide for the acquisition, construction, reconstruction or installation of parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities where assistance for such facilities is unavailable from other federal programs.

U.S. Department of Transportation

The U.S. Department of Transportation, established in 1968, includes the Federal Highway Administration. This agency administers the Federal Aid Highway Program, which provides grants to states and local governments for use in developing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Federal Aid Highway Program

This program was established by Title 23 United States Code, as revised by the Surface Transportation Assistance Acts and various other amendments. The program provides annual discretionary grants to qualifying governments for use in the acquisition of rights-of-way and the planning, construction, improvement and rehabilitation of interstate, primary, secondary and urban roads and highways. Funds may be used for capital improvements such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities within highway rights-of-way.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration supports public and private programs affecting outdoor recreation in North Carolina's coastal areas. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management is responsible for providing federal leadership in the management of the nation's coastal and marine resources. This is accomplished by providing management, research and technical assistance to federal, state and local governments and the private sector through the agency's Coastal Zone Management Program and National Marine Sanctuaries and Estuarine Research Reserves Program.

Coastal Zone Management Program

The Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 United States Code 1451), as amended, provides for grants-in-aid to coastal states with federally approved coastal zone management programs.

National Marine Sanctuaries and Estuarine Research Reserves Program

This program provides financial assistance to eligible public and private entities for the acquisition, development and administration of land and water resources within areas designated by the secretary of Commerce as marine sanctuaries or estuarine research reserves. These areas are set aside as laboratories for educational, recreational and research purposes. The program also makes financial assistance available to universities and private organizations for independent research projects, such as the study of water quality, water current modeling and the impacts of mosquito spraying and similar activities on aquatic life in sanctuaries and reserves. In North Carolina there are four such reserves that protect habitat for hundreds of species of fish, birds and other wildlife and provide environmental education opportunities. The reserves are administered by the Division of Coastal Management, N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

County Roles and Responsibilities

North Carolina has 100 counties, varying in character from the densely populated metropolitan counties such as Mecklenburg and Wake, to sparsely populated rural counties such as Jones and Gates. The counties have varying outdoor recreational needs that have prompted the establishment of different recreational programs.

Seventy-eight of North Carolina's counties have established recreational programs with parks, facilities and program activities. The larger land area of counties, as compared to municipalities, provides for a wider range of resources and makes available a greater variety of outdoor recreation possibilities. As a result, a county outdoor recreational program may offer a combination of resource-based and user-oriented activities to the public. Beaches, swimming sites, boat access sites, picnic areas, scenic areas and occasionally campgrounds are among the types of resource-based areas and facilities provided through county programs. Counties often provide facilities such as playgrounds, sports fields, tennis courts and other active outdoor recreation facilities as well.



Counties generally provide the resource-based and locally oriented outdoor recreational areas that are not large enough to be managed feasibly at the state or federal levels, or which do not have resources of statewide or national significance. Such areas constitute an invaluable part of the overall outdoor recreational effort in North Carolina and are indispensable to well-balanced statewide outdoor recreation.

Twenty-two of North Carolina's counties do not have officially established outdoor recreational programs. For these jurisdictions, provision of resource-based activities is often limited to

maintenance of picnic areas or boat ramps. User-oriented facilities are normally available only at public schools, municipal parks, state parks and federal areas. Three counties have no county or municipal recreation department: Hyde, Montgomery and Tyrrell.

Municipal Roles and Responsibilities

One hundred and fifty municipalities have recreational programs and facilities of some type, with trained staff involved in the administration of parks, facilities and activities. These programs and facilities vary greatly, depending mainly on the population of the municipality. Generally, smaller towns have more limited facilities. Smaller towns are more likely to rely on counties, local school systems or private organizations and groups to administer recreational activities.

Because of population densities and the lack of large open-space areas, most municipal recreation systems tend to concentrate their efforts on providing services involving more intensive user-oriented facilities that require relatively little space in proportion to the use accommodated. Typical municipal outdoor recreational facilities include playgrounds, swimming pools, ball fields, tennis courts and picnic areas. A few municipalities even provide golf courses.



Because municipal programs typically provide recreational facilities and programs in urban areas, they have only a limited bearing on statewide natural resource-based outdoor recreation. There are some exceptions, however, especially in the cases of parks located on bodies of water or coastal municipalities that provide public beach access.

Although most municipal programs do not typically provide resource-based outdoor recreational facilities, municipalities do play a vital role in providing facility-dependent recreational opportunities in North Carolina. The role of municipal programs will likely grow in importance as increased public emphasis is placed on recreation closer to home. Since municipal recreation agencies are closest to the populace, they are usually the first to feel the pressures to establish programs that meet the demands of residents. Consequently, municipalities are taking a lead role in educating citizens about active lifestyles as well as providing services that promote healthful living. As statistics about increasing obesity become available, these services are becoming more important.



A more recent trend is a greater emphasis on planning for and providing open space opportunities. This is particularly true for North Carolina's larger cities that are experiencing rapid population growth. Providing open space corridors affords a wide range of benefits including trail-related recreation, alternative transportation, improved water and air quality, and wildlife habitat. As more people become interested in the environment and in outdoor recreation in natural settings, municipal departments are providing opportunities to learn the skills to maximize outdoor experiences.

PRIVATE AGENCIES / PROGRAMS

In addition to publicly provided outdoor recreation, wide arrays of recreational opportunities are offered by the private sector. Many private agencies whose primary mission is not land management use recreation to achieve their objectives or create recreational opportunities as a consequence of their activities. In addition, many other recreational opportunities are provided by diverse sources such as churches, businesses and private swimming, tennis, fitness and country clubs.

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

The YMCA, founded in the United States in 1844, has as its mission to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy body, mind and spirit for all. Although each YMCA is associated with the national organization, programs, staffing and style of operation are set locally, run by volunteer boards. YMCA services are tailored to the community in this way. For example, the YMCA has a campus operation at Guilford College in Greensboro. Programs vary from those for older adults to pre-school ages. More than sixty YMCAs are located in North Carolina to serve members and program participants.

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

The YWCA has eight clubs in North Carolina. The organization's focus in the community is to provide programs and services to women, girls and their families by offering a wide range of services and programs that enrich and transform lives. YWCAs assist with programs and information that deal with a variety of critical issues including child and youth development, and health and fitness.

Boys Clubs and Boys and Girls Clubs

The 111 North Carolina Boys Clubs and Boys and Girls Clubs are nonprofit corporations that serve youngsters, age 6 to 18, with after-school, weekend and evening activities and programs. Nationwide, over half the young people in these clubs are from minority families, families with low annual incomes and families with four or more children. Volunteers, career professionals and staff attempt to build the self-esteem and motivation of participating youngsters through club health programs, physical education and environmental education programs, all of which incorporate outdoor recreational activities.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America

The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts each have councils in North Carolina. Camping, environmental education, swimming and canoeing are emphasized by both scout groups. Most of these activities are centered in primitive to semi-developed camps either leased or owned by the councils. Outdoor activities are offered throughout the year.

4-H Clubs

4-H, a program of the NC Cooperative Extension Service, is jointly funded by the federal, state and county governments. Its mission is to provide youth and adults with opportunities to develop decision-making, problem-solving and leadership skills through experience. In all 100 counties, each 4-H program is determined by a local advisory board. Although it was once considered a program for agricultural communities, urban counties such as Wake and Guilford have strong 4-H programs.

Outdoor education emphasizes natural resource conservation. Youngsters participate in outdoor recreational activities in the community, including camping. The North Carolina organization operates three camps, operated on the traditional summer camp model. The Betsy-Jeff Penn Camp also functions as an outdoor education center during the school year. Children in the third through eighth grades have the option of staying onsite two or four nights. The environmental education program includes studies on weather, ecology, wildlife and outdoor activities such as orienteering.

COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS

Commercial providers of outdoor recreation satisfy significant public needs in North Carolina. Commercial firms can finance projects requiring large capital investments and react more quickly to changes in public demands. Specialized needs of relatively small groups of participants can also be addressed by commercial recreation providers. Although commercial providers are distributed across North Carolina, they are concentrated around vacation destinations.

Whitewater rafting outfitters in Western North Carolina serve thousands of floaters each year. On the Nantahala River alone, approximately 200,000 people floated down the river each year. Outfitters also operate on several other popular whitewater rivers such as the Nolichucky, French Broad and Tuskasegee rivers.

Another major recreation industry in Western North Carolina is snow skiing. Six major ski areas are located in the Western part of the state. While total annual participation varies considerably depending on snowfall, nearly 700,000 skiers participated in 2010. Golf is another activity that is provided primarily by the commercial sector. In North Carolina, there are over 600 golf courses in 2014. Many are private and daily fee courses.

Most of North Carolina's campgrounds are privately owned. More than 300 are dispersed throughout the state, offering over 15,000 campsites. This represents the vast majority of the 19,000 or so public and private campsites in North Carolina.

Private, for-profit recreational enterprises offer a variety of other outdoor opportunities in North Carolina. Such enterprises include driving ranges and mini-golf, water parks, amusement parks, batting cages, paint ball facilities, summer camps, private zoos, gem mining, scenic railroads, cruises, deep sea fishing, bus tours, professional baseball and nature tours. Because of its size, complexity and changing nature, however, private outdoor recreation is extremely difficult to inventory in a comprehensive manner.